



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

### Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

#### Refuge Highlights

**September 2019:** The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge is presently located in twenty-two different locations in the four primary Connecticut River watershed states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

#### Gates Installed on Moody Bridge Road, Hadley, Massachusetts



Photo Credit: USFWS

Refuge staff installed gates on both the east and west ends of Moody Bridge Road, at the Fort River Division in Hadley, MA. The gates replace the cement blocks placed by the Town of Hadley when they closed the road due to the failure of a large culvert. The gates allow staff access to the road for management purposes, as well as access for municipal emergency personnel.

For more information contact: [Andrew\\_French@fws.gov](mailto:Andrew_French@fws.gov)

#### Conte Refuge Awards Trout Unlimited “Conservation Partnership Award”



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte Refuge was pleased to present an “*Outstanding Conservation Partnership Award*” to the Pioneer Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Members of the TU Chapter have played an integral role in the success of our Cops & Bobbers, Hooks & Ladders Youth Fishing Events and our Veteran Fishing Programs. Volunteers from TU dedicate their time at these events to introduce people to the sport of fishing by demonstrating fishing techniques, maintaining equipment and offering fishing advice. Their time and dedication to these programs is valued and appreciated.

For more information contact: [Jennifer\\_Lapis@fws.gov](mailto:Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov)

#### Conte Refuge Hosts “Round the World Women”



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte Refuge hosted more than forty women from the organization *Round the World Women*. Refuge staff conducted a guided tour at the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail, along with additional hands-on activities, highlighting local wildlife. The organization welcomes international members of the community, and provides social opportunities for them to learn about their neighbors and connect with other women living in the United States. We look forward to seeing these women return to the trail with their families.

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### Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

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#### A Festival for Fort River



Photo Credit: USFWS

The Conte Refuge participated in the Fort River Watershed Association's Fort River Festival. The festival consisted of an organized river clean up at various points along the river, and a community festival to celebrate the efforts. Refuge staff set up a table at the event with information and activities related to the Conte Refuge and the Fort River Division. The event drew more than 100 participants from the community, all connected by their care and compassion for keeping the Fort River clean and accessible for wildlife and outdoor recreation.

For more information contact: [Jennifer\\_Lapis@fws.gov](mailto:Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov)

#### Students Harvest Milkweed Seeds at Fort River Division



Photo Credit: USFWS

Students from Amherst, MA Regional Summit Academy visited the Fort River Division of the Conte Refuge to help harvest milkweed seeds. The visit was part of a larger project the students are conducting in partnership with the refuge, that will result in a pollinator garden and school yard habitat being created at their school. Some of the seeds will be spread in other sections of the refuge, and some will be planted in the school's pollinator garden. The students will dry and store the seeds for the winter, and refuge staff will visit the school in the spring to help with the planting.

For more information contact: [Jennifer\\_Lapis@fws.gov](mailto:Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov)

#### Partners for River Cleanup



Photo Credit: Michael Caduto/  
Sustainable Woodstock

The Conte Refuge, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Fish and Aquatic Conservation, Connecticut River Conservancy, Sustainable Woodstock, and the Woodstock DPW teamed up to help clean and restore the Ottauquechee River in Vermont. The team removed three dump truck loads of debris that had been in the river since Hurricane Irene. With the use of heavy equipment, the group removed large items that in years past could not be taken out by hand. This project increases access to the river in downtown Woodstock and reduces recreation hazards in the river.

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### Pondicherry Division - Natural Community Mapping



Photo Credit: USFWS

Field ecologists are wrapping up field data collection for natural community mapping at the Silvio O. Conte NFWR Pondicherry Division. Natural community data will provide information on the habitat characteristics that should be in the landscape based on the physical environment and the natural processes that effect them. Since habitats within the Division have been altered from past land uses, this data will be a key component for informing management decision as we draft the Division Habitat Management plan.

For more information contact: [Steve\\_Agius@fws.gov](mailto:Steve_Agius@fws.gov)

### Nulhegan Basin Division - Aquatic Organism Passage Improvements



Photo Credit: USFWS

The staff at the Nulhegan Basin Division have been actively engaged with conservation partners in Northern Vermont to identify culvert replacement projects that would improve aquatic organism passage. In September, two corrugated metal culverts were replaced with concrete box culverts. The new culverts are embedded with native materials to increase aquatic organism passage. Brook trout have already been observed passing through the new culverts. The projects are part of an Eastern Federal Highways project to replace and upgrade five culverts on the refuge division in 2019.

For more information contact: [Steve\\_Agius@fws.gov](mailto:Steve_Agius@fws.gov)

### Road Improvement Projects at the Nulhegan Basin Division



Photo Credit: USFWS

In September, a combination of more than 30 lane miles of roads were graded and the road shoulders mowed to improve public access to the Nulhegan Basin Division. Road work was completed by refuge staff and a local contractor.

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#### Making The Most of Boat Training



Photo Credit: USFWS

Deputy Refuge Manager Dean Rhine made good use of the hours required for driving the station's airboat. Rhine used the required time on the water to scout cleanup locations south of Hartford, Connecticut for the annual Source to Sea Cleanup, organized by the Connecticut River Conservancy. The work is another example of the collaborative approach towards improvements of the Connecticut River.

For more information contact: [Andrew\\_French@fws.gov](mailto:Andrew_French@fws.gov)

#### Outdoor Classroom at Fannie Stebbins Unit



Photo Credit: USFWS

Three days in the field resulted in a great start on the ADA compliant elevated walkway and pavilion at the Fannie Stebbins Unit of the Conte Refuge. Forty-eight feet of walkway have been installed, and it appears the visiting public can not wait to use it. The frame for the sixteen by sixteen foot pavilion is almost in place, with a completion date of mid October. Once finished, refuge staff and partners will use the site to host youth groups, community organizations and other refuge visitors.

For more information contact: [Andrew\\_French@fws.gov](mailto:Andrew_French@fws.gov)

#### One Step Closer to Archery



Photo Credit: USFWS

This month we continued preparations for the public archery range being built at the Fort River Division of the Refuge. The site, located on the east end of Moody Bridge road has been mowed, with plans to continue construction into the fall. The archery range will be fully accessible and will be free and open to the public for use.

For more information contact: [Andrew\\_French@fws.gov](mailto:Andrew_French@fws.gov)

#### Saddle Island Unit - Connecticut River, New Hampshire



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte Refuge staff, along with staff from the New England Field Office, the North Atlantic—Appalachian Regional Office, the New Hampshire Fish and Game and Vermont Fish and Game conducted a site visit to Saddle Island. The island is home to a number of plants of conservation value in the Connecticut River Watershed. Efforts are being made to assess the abundance and diversity of plants that grow within the unique habitat.

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#### Source To Sea on the Connecticut River



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte's annual participation in the Connecticut River Conservancy's *Source to Sea* event was very rewarding. While waiting for nearly 50 volunteers to fill their bags around Whethersfield Cove in Connecticut, we retrieved the remnants of a 1950's vehicle. All that was left were the frame, suspension, and steering system. It was quite rusty and still very heavy. Our effort with CRC and volunteers in the river near the confluence of the Ashuelot River with the Connecticut River yielded 64 tires.

For more information contact: [Andrew\\_French@fws.gov](mailto:Andrew_French@fws.gov)

#### Making the Most of a Beautiful Fall Day at the Refuge



Photo Credit: USFWS

The interpretive signs at the pollinator garden were exceptionally popular on a gorgeous day in September. Visitors to the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail spent time admiring the garden's beautiful fall colors while learning about the garden's value to local wildlife.

For more information contact: [Andrew\\_French@fws.gov](mailto:Andrew_French@fws.gov)

#### National Public Lands Day at Nulhegan Basin Division



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conservation partners joined forces to improve public access at the Nulhegan Division of the Conte Refuge. Backcountry Hunters and Anglers members from MA, NH, NY, and VT and The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Conservation Group worked together to re-deck the largest bridge on the refuge. The bridge is critical for accessing the 45 square mile refuge. The National Public Lands Day project highlighted the value of collaborating with conservation partners to improve public access on a National Wildlife Refuge

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